

METHUEN

Longmans

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WHICH MAN, IN WHICH NOVEL?

WHEN THE NOVELS before about 1830 are under discussion, they are commonly assumed to have been aspiring to a condition of realism. This assumption arises not only from the numerical preponderance of realistic novels taken into account, but also to the fact that realism can easily be thought of as a progressive development, a tradition whose development can be conceived in extremely simple terms.

We observe, for instance, that Fielding can individualize Squire Western by his manner of speech but fails to do so with many of his less obviously comic characters, whereas Jane Austen individualizes virtually all her characters by the way they talk. In this, we say, she is more realistic. Increasing plausibility of plot and the avoidance of melodramatic contrivances are other manifestations of the same supposed tendency. It is less usual than it was to treat later novels in this way, but with the exception of Sterne—a writer who is relegated to footnotes more often than most—the novelists of the eighteenth century are quite likely to be dealt with in this way. Their divergences from the conventions of realism can easily be attributed to forgivable inefficiency or to the residual influence of other literary traditions. The novel, critics are always apt to say, was slowly ridding itself of alien elements and discovering its true nature.

It is for this reason that Professor Dimovian's *The Shaping Vision* is welcome: he writes mostly about the eighteenth century and he is concerned with how the tradition of fiction as a literary form came to be developed, but he is well aware of the danger of setting up narrow concepts of the norm. He states roundly at the beginning that "Every novel is exactly what it is, not a shadowy and imperfect reflection of some unrealized ideal novel." The bulk of his book consists of studies of the major novelists from Defoe to Dickens; most of them are relatively elementary, but on the less well-trodden ground he is a useful

guide. A chapter which contrasts *Redgummet* and *Henry Esmond* as modes of historical fiction, for example, is perceptive and helpful. We may forgive him the implications of calling *Tristram Shandy* an "anti-novel" for the sake of a discussion of novels, especially eighteenth-century ones, in their own terms rather than in terms of evolution or of the documentation practised by those who are, in his own words, "less interested in literary form than in social and intellectual backgrounds".

Professor Steeves, who has emerged from retirement to produce a work of unashamed popularization, is certainly one of those who find it most natural to talk about novels in terms of social history. In *Before Jane Austen* he summarizes plots, writes chapters on aspects of eighteenth-century life and provides a most interesting collection of contemporary illustrations. He accepts an evolutionary view of the development of fiction, though disclaiming the evolutionary metaphor, and sees his chosen subject as a very primitive stage of development. Of *Gulliver's Travels* he says that it is "one of the things that pleased readers before the chemically pure novel came into existence" and of Jane Austen:

Miss Austen's Johnsons never exceed the standards of "elegance" still current in her time. Yet even in her disapproval she shows Johnsons' circumspectness and rigidity. It was a conventional and confining tradition upon which she had to build to her writing books some of the ease and grace of plain English that remained to be rediscovered by later novelists.

Professor Steeves's book is something of a curiosity in that it appears out of its time, a monument to a past standard of judgment: Mrs. Spearman's *The Novel and Society* is an oddity of a different kind. Her aim is to discuss how far the works of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding can be said to reflect the society of their age, and her starting point is a controversy of the claim that the novel is essentially a middle-class form. She brings to her investigation a prodigious width of reading in medieval and Oriental literature and, apparently, a training as a sociologist. She is able to demonstrate that neither *Mine de Lafayette* nor the *Lady Murrain* were of the middle classes and also that novelists are influenced by their day dreams and by non-novelistic writing. But it is a man of straw whom she destroys. She takes critical interferences with astonishing literal-mindedness and achieves effects of misleading precision by quoting articles as authorities in the manner in which research papers are cited in the exact sciences. Cross-fertilization of disciplines may be valuable and there are moments when her width of reading enables her to make a shrewd point, but she seems not to understand fully what critics mean when they speak of literature reflecting its age. She takes into account only questions of the exactness of documentary accounts of common life.

She proves her case beyond any doubt, but we knew it already. Critics who wish to discuss the relationship of novels to society during the past hundred years obviously cannot confine themselves to questions of documentary representation; they are forced to consider how even fantasies bear the marks of their age. This can, and often does, open the way to generalizations rather wider and less securely based than those we encounter in any other supposedly academic discipline. When critics of eighteenth-century literature raise their eyes from the page they talk of the position of women in middle-class society; critics of modern literature tend to talk of the Existential Night of Modern Man. Criticism of Fielding is often social history in masquerade; criticism of Joyce is often the substitute theology of a secular age.

Both Professor Walcott and Mr. Friedman believe passionately that the quality of our lives is both reflected in and influenced by fiction. They both feel the need to extract a discernible line of development from the novels which have been written during the past hundred years or so. The judgments of value which they reach are almost diametrically opposed, yet their readings of the books upon which they base the judgments are remarkably similar. Both, it should be emphasized, are often good critics when dealing with individual works. Professor Walcott, for example, has an excellent section on Henry James and Mr. Friedman on E. M. Forster. Moreover, Professor Walcott charms us by saying that he has "elected to work with a relatively small number of fictional exhibits" and goes on to discuss more than fifty books, and Mr. Friedman by starting with a comparison between *The Young Visitors* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. But they would agree that their books stand or fall in the long run by the theses which they present.

Mr. Friedman's main argument in *The Turn of the Novel* is very clear; he states it on the first page: The traditional premise about the design of experience which was profoundly, if variously, embodied in the eighteenth and nineteenth century novel, was the premise of a closed experience. That is, in any, the novel traditionally represented an expanding moral and emotional disturbance which promised not along to arrive, after its greatest climax, at an ending that would and could check that foregoing expansion. And so it did, more or less: first more, then less. But in the twentieth century a new assumption about the nature and the end of experience slowly came to dominate the book. My theme and the argument of this book is the existence in the novel of a gradual historical shift from a closed form to an open form.

His heroes are Hardy, Conrad, Forster, Lawrence and Joyce, and he salutes Nabokov, Beckett and William Burroughs, who seem anti-rational and anti-moral, but who, effect, because of their refusal to bring the experience of their books to a resolution, "an ethical dilemma in its own right". The book ends with a peace which asserts that the modern novel structures and informs the self of the reader by its true ending, either an ever-widening disorder or a finally open "order" which embraces all the opposed directions on whatever ethical compass it has brought along for the trip. Like the modern cosmos, the modern novel is ever expanding, and it is racing away fastest at its outermost reaches.

It is clear that in a number of their key examples their case is shaky. A central point of Professor Walcott's case, for example, is the representative significance of the famous passage in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in which Stephen Dedalus concludes his discussion with Lynch on aesthetics with mention of the artist "within or behind or beyond or above his handling, invisible, released out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails". This must be one of the most commonly misinterpreted passages in English literature and Professor Walcott accepts the normal view that it is a proclamation of the moral neutrality of the artist, thus enabling himself to cast Joyce as the villain who opened the floodgates. Read in its context, the passage is saying nothing of the kind; Stephen Dedalus is talking in part about a technical matter of storytelling and in part he is asking for what Keats called "negative capability".

Professor Walcott traces the growth of the character-action relation in three stages. First only the story mattered, and the character appeared in the deed. Then came the notion of a motive apart from the deed. And third, the romantic idea of a self that could not be expressed fully by any deed leads to the contemporary mode that presents the aimless hero in the plotless novel, a character (or un-character) left in a void by the absence of clear, firm issues to which he can respond with significant choices. It is here that life may be copying art, rather than the reverse. This, too, is a pilgrimage is followed from Jane Austen, the example of the perfect expression of character in action, through Conrad and Melville, where ideas come to mean more than characters, to Joyce, the great of late, the man who proclaimed the ideal of the objective novel, the novel in which there is no observer to take up a moral position. This, Professor Walcott says, leads via ambiguity to "the concept of moral detachment of author from subject" and this to "a hundred versions of the diminished self", of which one example is *Moby-Dick*, "a confused and terrible of words" exerted by verbal witches.

Professor Walcott is prepared to use almost any stick to beat modern novels and this weakens the force of his argument. The claim that modern psychology (which Mr. Friedman would have as a liberating force) turns characters into puppets is not strengthened by restating it on an account of the value-free brought about by the defending lawyer at the end of Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*. But it is clear that, trimmed of its wider appeals to true American values, his argument goes parallel with that of Mr. Friedman.

They both have interesting resemblances to part of the argument of Laurence Lerner. Most of *The Truth-tellers* is a sound but somewhat pedestrian discussion of his three chosen writers and he is far less concerned to fit a lot of writers into a pattern. But he sees fiction as a developing genre and discusses at some length the effect of psychology in teaching us about forces which Mr. Friedman believes to be liberating and Professor Walcott devaluing. His conclusion is that Jane Austen is a pre-Romantic, believing in the restraint of impulse; George Eliot is a positive Romantic, in whose work are released impulses of love and secular moral aspirations; D. H. Lawrence is a Romantic subversive, in whose works are released all those forces of cruelty, horror and egotism which Nietzsche defined so well. In saying that this typology can be made "with delicious and dangerous ease", Mr. Lerner is admitting what Mr. Friedman and Professor Walcott never recognize or, recognizing, ignore. Their generalizations are heady stuff and they give to literature and to critics a vast significance. But we must ask—dull though the questions seem after these vast perspectives—whether they are made a little too easily, whether, in fact, they depend upon an arbitrary selection of works and an arbitrary interpretation of those selected.

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UNDER THE BIOLOGIST'S KNIFE

P. B. MEDAWAR: *The Art of the Soluble*. 159pp. Methuen. 25s.

Biologists have always provided a large and eloquent proportion of the scientists who are prepared to stoop to explain to the layman the implications of their work. Sir Peter Medawar is one who, having earned a high reputation in his subject, has assumed the mantle of Elijah. He has much in common with his spiritual forebear, Spencer, the Huxleys and Haldane are perhaps the best known in this country—and like most of them he is not afraid to let his pen wander to the point of speculation. He also has a mildly ironical style of writing and an ability to express himself tersely, both of which are likely to commend him to the modern reader.

Here eight of his essays are reprinted, all having first appeared within the past ten years. Each of the first five concerns a different aspect: D'Arcy Thompson, Herbert Spencer, Darwin and Teilhard de Chardin are the subjects of literary autopsy, and in Arthur Koestler's case there is an attempted vivisection. Professor Medawar's sharp but kindly knife is put aside during most of the last three essays, in which he surveys trends in biology, and in attitudes to the nature and purpose of science. Is science the mere accumulation of fact? There are many scientists who pay lip-service to the idea that it is not, but who nevertheless act as though it were. Truth, at the one extreme, is said to reside in Nature, waiting to be wrestled out. In the "romantic" conception of science, what is true yields place to the imaginative grasp of what might be. The first group emphasizes the existence of a set of infallible scientific procedures science knew "The Method" long before it was known to drama. The romantics

underline the need for men of genius, capable of using their imagination in the slightly irrational and inexplicable manner of the poet. Professor Medawar points to the English resistance to "Pure Research" as a manifestation of the fact that poetry has in England traditionally been held in esteem. Just as we tend to look at commissioned poetry as a contradiction in terms, so we esteem that part of science most which supposedly cannot be commissioned. But according to Professor Medawar, "poetic" inspiration is not a valid guide to imaginative activity in its forms. Neither purely nor usefully enters into the scientist's evaluation of his own research. We prize purity, it is said, because "pure science is a gentle and even creditable activity for scientists in universities," whereas "applied science, with all its horrid connotations of trade, has no place on the campus." This essay, "Two conceptions of science," is one of the best in the book, and in his plea for a change of attitude it is impossible not to admire Professor Medawar's optimism.

The next essay, "Hypothesis and imagination" first printed in these columns (October 25, 1963), is a more specific account of the scientist's procedure. On the scientific method and method, on deduction and the so-called hypothetico-deductive view of science, and on the nature of experiment, Professor Medawar has little to say which has not been said before; but seldom has it been said so attractively. The same is true of the essay "A biological retrospect", which among other things notes the disappearance of eugenics from the scientific scene, the "quiet revolution" leading to the current structural view of the physical basis of life.

To return to the first five essays,

in America it has recently become fashionable to produce paperback volumes, composed of articles reprinted from periodical literature. Separate series of so-called "Readings" have appeared within the past few years, for the most part built around topics of current interest and often easily accessible work. These compilations are evidently intended primarily for undergraduate consumption. The idea seems to be to expose the student to the raw material of psychological research, uncontaminated by the judgment of lecturer or textbook writer. And so in a sense they do. On the other hand, they might be thought to provide far too much detail and far too little guidance to have a real educational function. In the ordinary way, students are referred to journal articles by tutors or lecturers, and gradually learn to use the journals in a selective and critical fashion. The proliferation of volumes of "Readings" may well discourage critical enterprise and intellectual resourcefulness on the

part of students. At all events, no proper inquiry into the educational merits, if any, of this form of compilation ever seems to have been undertaken.

In this innovation as in so much else, British psychology is nowaping the American model. Under the general editorship of Professor Brian Foss and a distinguished advisory board, Penguin Books have launched their new series of Modern Psychology readings, of which these four are the first. Ultimately, it is hoped to achieve a more or less complete coverage of the major topics of current interest. More than twenty-five volumes are projected, of which a further five are promised later this year.

In *Motivation*, Dr. Binda and Dr. Stewart have provided a very reasonable selection of excerpts from books and papers dealing with what once were called "the springs of action". From the original idea of "instinctive energy", which we owe to James Freud and McDougall, we reach the concept of "drive" as it has developed in modern Behaviourist psychology. There are useful extracts from Woodworth, Hull, Hebb and others more recent. There is also a well-presented discussion of the role of drive and reinforcement in learning, which has so oddly obsessed American psychologists. Although there is a short extract from Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, which appeared in 1872, more than half the papers in this volume date from the 1950s. This is a well-organized volume within its rather narrow frame of reference.

Professor Magdalen Vernon's *Experiments in Visual Perception* has been compiled with this author's characteristic regard for good facts, good sense and good judgment. She gives us thirty-nine extracts from the journals, mostly experimental reports, and covering the general field of vision research in its psychological aspects. Among the topics considered are the perception of form, depth and distance, the constancy phenomena, movement perception and the influence of subjective factors upon perceptual judgment. She also includes four short extracts from Professor Piaget's work on the development of perception in young children.

In spite of its excellence, tenders

MIND READINGS

Motivation. Edited by Dnibir Wudra and Joe Stewart. 352pp. *Experiments in Visual Perception*. Edited by M. D. Vernon. 443pp. *Attitudes, Beliefs and Values*. Edited by Boris Senneker. 375pp. *Personality Assessment*. Edited by Boris Senneker. 443pp. Penguin. 8s. 6d. each.

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ACADEMY OF VISUAL ARTS, 12, St. John's, London W1

• Doherty, 82, St. John's, London W1
• Lodge, William, Longwood, 1903
• Greene, Director of Studies, 1904
• Hubbard, 82, St. John's, London W1

HOUSE OF CARDS

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SUGAR AND WATER

W. R. ALEXANDER: *Sweet Melancholy*. 161pp. Heinemann, 3s.
H. R. VALENTINE: *Water for the Service of Man*. 223pp. 8s.

art and industry meet here on more harmonious terms than they do elsewhere in Europe.

Prof. Vallentyne

337pp. London Record Society.

significant scale of the transatlantic slave trade and its maintenance for several centuries was due primarily to the demand for sugar in Europe and North America. The central focus of this study of the hydrologic cycle is only about 1 percent of the total water in the world available for consumption in the best conditions men can survive in. Perhaps half a gallon is available in the United States for each person per day per year, or 1,350 gallons. The volume of the water cycle is enormous. In every possible way the distribution of supply is uneven. (For the rest of us, the water is not as important as it seems to be, and not as

Professor Gloss explains some of the ways in which a demographer can use the lists. Other readers may seek, and find, entertainment in them. They will, perhaps, find no more odd names than they can find in any telephone directory, but they will, from time to time, come upon descriptive names which seem like the deliberate inventions of novelists, such names as Miss Dot Pinchard, Miss Kissia Pretty (and the perfect name for a curmudgeon) Mr. Gringling Hudge. For beauty the prize goes to Mary Rosecroft. But the most noticeable thing in the lists is the most commonest names today—Smith, Brown, Jones, Robinson, and many more—were also the commonest 300 years ago.

country until it is now com-
with that of any other coun-

Euston. 114pp. 48 plates. Faber

Rutland, known since the sixteenth century in Cambridge, was surprisingly little used there—perhaps, as the writer suspects, because the early masons disliked it for its hardness. Many of the quarries are now abandoned, raising the question whether in the future enough stone will be forthcoming to maintain and renovate the old buildings; on the other hand, Mr. Purcell rather unexpectedly assures us there is no decline in the human material—“young men are still being drawn to this craft and the other masons will do the work.”

This is a valuable and necessary book for everyone concerned with Cambridge architecture, though it cannot be said quite to equal Arkell's in intimate knowledge of the subject.

Since the last war the impression has been carefully fostered that catering standards in Britain have risen significantly. Mr. Cooper quotes Lord Gieddes, chairman of the British Travel Association, as saying in 1965, "our restaurants these days are providing standards of cooking and service as good as any to be found on the Continent". And in the same year Mr. Desmond Hopkinson, chairman of the Association of British Travel Agents, stated: "generalising . . . the standard of restaurant food has risen by leaps and bounds in this country until it is now comparable with that of any other country". Then there is Mr. Raymond Postgate's pioneering *Good Food Guide* as a biennially revised witness to a restaurant renaissance, even if not all of its eighteen recently-listed restaurants might have merited a single inset in the Michelin Guide.

contribution to the current debate about God. He deals with all the familiar contributors to the debate, and while the reader may feel that he is being asked to cover once more ground that he knows very well, he is constantly brought up sharply by the sense that the discussion is in fresh hands, and that Professor Ogden is taking his lead without subservience. He is loath to summarize, but he does seem to hold that a whole area of the problem of the reality of God has been made unnecessarily difficult by treating God as an object separable from other objects for the purpose of analysis. He would say that on the contrary we are discussing a universal encountered everywhere, the intelligible meaning of every consideration, a reality occupying the centre as well as the fringes of thought.

The serious philosopher, and certainly Professor Ogden, can be aware that in handling the idea of God he is trying to deal with something in the last resort will not submit to analysis, and that the echoes of the Athanasian Creed are not far from the best that the

ABOUT GOD

of God and other essays. 237pp. SCM Press. 30s.

ence, and the real reply to a philosopher like, for example, Professor Ayer, may not be further argument but to say, "Try it and see". Argu-

ment about God, even on the part of those who would defend the idea, must anyway slip dangerously close to atheism. Tillich has certainly slipped close, so on a lesser level has John Robinson, but the flaw is not in the men but in the reasoning, which will not go quite the whole way. . . .

All this comes out very clearly when Professor Ogden is dealing with *God in history* or *Christianity*—what is meant by saying "Jesus is Lord." The paradoxical nature of the problem is obviously considerable. "The Word was made flesh," and there is immediately the problem of "the two natures."—"God's chosen people," and we are confronting the question

method and its laboratory proofs have become common form, we feel that the paradox should be resolved if the Faith is to be effectively presented to the men of the new world. The task is difficult. Parity is a matter of language; for words no longer mean quite what they did in the first few centuries. But it is also a matter of thought, the transference of ideas framed in an earlier world into ours, and of being sure that in transferring them we do not turn them into something else. If it, we must confess, sometimes difficult to be sure that what comes out of Professor Ogden's thought is what went in.

of the Worker Priests. Edited and transl.

The Chronicle of the Worker Priests. Edited and translated by Stanley Winduss. 156pp. Merlin Press. 25s.

No clear indication is given of the original text of this untidily arranged account of the history of the French worker-priest movement, in which a factual chronicle is interspersed with an anonymous commentary. Much of the passion aroused by the movement and its condemnation has died down by now, but it remains an episode of cardinal significance for the Church's understanding of its role in an industrialized and de-christianized society.

This *Chronicle* reflects the hopes and fears of the movement; its naive political optimism; its generous desire to bridge the gap between the Church and the world of the workers; its lack of theological precision in defining its exact mission. Its heroism and its ultimate hopelessness. Here we can see the familiar institutional processes at work; the anonymous denunciation and the Roman *firm*. But perhaps Rome was wiser than many people suspected, for what was at stake was not merely the preservation of a priestly caste from the taint of political action and industrial involvement. Soon after the experiment came to an end the Second Vatican Council was called into being, and many of the problems posed by the worker-priests were to find expression in its decrees—notably in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The work of implementing the decrees is another matter, it is true, and what was learnt in France in the years immediately after the last war is immediately relevant to that task. There is need for a serious assessment of the worker-priest movement in view of the Church's mission today, and the *Chronicle* provides some useful hints: it is altogether too slight and haphazard a compilation to be of real use in forming a judgment.

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